



Michigan Education Association

Office of the President

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Friday, March 18, 2011

Dear MEA member,

To put it bluntly, we are under assault in Lansing.

Dozens of bills being considered on a daily basis at the Capitol are outright attacks on our students, our members, our communities and our future.

And we must take action accordingly.

Here is just a sample of the legislative attacks currently underway:

- Gov. Snyder's proposed budget would **slash at least \$470 per pupil** from every school district in the state - and **upwards of \$1,000 per pupil in some districts**, when you take into account other K-12 funding cuts. His budget would also raid the School Aid Fund to pay for community colleges and higher education (which also take steep funding cuts). **These cuts will sacrifice the educational future of more than a million Michigan students.** Class sizes will skyrocket given drastic layoffs, important student programs will be eliminated, and you, as school employees, will continue to be called on to make concessions - **on top of the more than \$1 billion you've given up over the past few years.**
 - As part of his budget plan, Gov. Snyder also wants to eliminate the Earned Income Tax Credit and do away with pension tax exemptions, effectively **raising taxes on the working poor and on retirees** - all to pay for a massive business tax cut he's proposing for his corporate CEO cronies.
 - Gov. Snyder has signed into law **emergency manager legislation that will destroy the collective bargaining rights of our members** and the local control of democratically elected bodies in school districts, cities and other local government entities that are in "financial crisis" (crises that are being caused by the aforementioned budget cuts).
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- House Bill 4152 is pending in the Senate - this bill would **freeze step increases and district health care costs when a contract expires**, forcing you to give up salary and pay any insurance increases out of your pocket. **And it bans any retroactive contract settlements that would address that financial loss later on, once you've settled your contract.**
 - HB 4306 would mandate that school districts request bids to **outsource all transportation, custodial and food service work**, threatening the livelihoods of tens of thousands of dedicated education support professionals.
 - Bills are also being considered to require all school employees to **pay at least 20 percent of their health insurance premiums and slash your salary by 5 percent** - regardless of what concessions you've already taken locally.

Waiting in the wings are even more attacks on your jobs, your rights, your schools and your students - but I think you get the picture. **To stop these assaults, we must stand up!**

The MEA Board has directed our state and local associations to ratchet up our actions around this crisis. **Your local president has been asked to call a general membership meeting before April 15, at which you'll be asked to take a vote giving authority to MEA to initiate crisis activities up to and including job action.** This is a very serious request that reflects the severity of the situation in which we find ourselves.

MEA will not stand silent while Michigan's public schools and middle class are under attack. These votes are the path by which MEA will stand 155,000 strong in defense of our jobs, our rights and the futures of our students and communities. **Should lawmakers fail to end these attacks on the people of Michigan, we will not shy away from taking action to stop them.**

Let me be clear on what this vote means: it authorizes MEA to engage in significant activities - up to and including a work stoppage - that will increase the pressure on our legislators. And it provides us with your backing to engage in larger scale, public activities in response to these attacks on our rights and our future. *Enclosed, you'll find a question and answer document regarding this vote.*

This is an unprecedented action appropriate for unprecedented times. Between now and the end of this school year, we must stand up in support of our schools and our middle class - without which, Michigan cannot have a bright future. We all may have to sacrifice to stand up for what we know is right. I am advising all MEA members to make appropriate plans to ensure you and your family's financial security, including delaying major expenses and saving funds to cover your household expenses for as much as two months.

Thank you for your solidarity as we advocate for our members and our students in these extraordinary times. I am confident that history will look back at 2011 as a turning point for Michigan - and **I am steadfast in my belief that public school employees and Michigan's Middle Class will be on the winning side of this fight.**

Sincerely,

Iris K. Salters MEA President